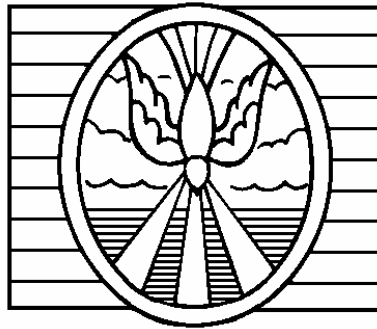


You Have Asked to Have Your Child  
Baptized:

An Invitation to a Life of Faith



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish  
Bernardsville, NJ

## To begin with . . .

Dear Parents,

Congratulations on the birth or expectation of your child! Be assured that you and your child will share in our prayers. May Almighty God richly bless you with joy and good health as you celebrate his gift of new life.

We are delighted that you have approached our parish to begin the preparations for your child's baptism. We eagerly look forward to working with you to prepare for this moment of grace and joy for your child and your entire family.

One thing that may surprise you is that the preparations for your child's baptism begin with you. As you know, the church encourages all her members to lead a life of faith for their own spiritual well-being; such a life includes, among other things, regular times of prayer both at home and in church, reception of the sacraments, works of charity, and striving to make the teaching and example of Jesus Christ manifest in your own daily living.

While we encourage such a lifestyle for all our members, we place a special emphasis on the Christian lifestyle of those blessed with the awesome, God-given call of parenthood; in this special role, your practice of the faith either creates or hinders your child's relationship with his Heavenly Father. The sacred trust involved in recognizing that your beloved child is also God's beloved child, and in raising him or her accordingly is so important and so significant, that we invite you take some time to consider how you might best prepare to fulfill this trust.

Below are a series of questions that we would ask you to reflect upon. Our experience with many families suggests that the answers to these questions are a good indicator of whether your son or daughter will be raised in surroundings which are wonderfully filled with or sadly devoid of God's presence. If you find the answers to these questions to be encouraging please accept our sincere thanks for the Christian lifestyle you have been leading; you are the people who work day by day to make our world a more Christlike place. If the answers to these questions suggest a need for some changes, then please take this pamphlet as a heartfelt invitation your practice of the faith means so much to us and will matter

tremendously to your child. If our families, our communities, and our world are to become better, more Christlike places, it will only be because people like yourselves have taken the concrete steps necessary to make a difference.

Please accept this invitation in the spirit in which it is intended. Like you, we want the very best for your child—the best in every dimension of his or her life. Our particular responsibility as the church is to encourage the best for your child in the ways of faith. We recognize the awesome responsibility that has been laid upon your shoulders as parents. We are always ready to help, support, and encourage you to meet those responsibilities in such a manner as to provide your child with the best possible opportunity to know, love, and serve the God of all creation.

May God bless you now and always,

*(Rev.) John N. Fell, Pastor*

## Some questions to reflect upon, pray over, and discuss . . .

- 1.) God asks us to love him with our whole mind, our whole heart, and all our strength. How good is my own relationship with the Lord? Do I pray often? Do I regularly offer God praise and thanksgiving by actively participating in the mass and receiving the sacraments? Do I seek God's guidance as I ponder over key decisions? Is my relationship with the Lord a real part of my life, or has it become just a slogan, just a happy thought without any real meaning in my daily living?
- 2.) God asks us to love all people as he loves them. How do I treat those closest to me—my family members, co-workers, and friends? Am I patient, kind, compassionate, and forgiving? After spending time with me, would others recognize me as an agent of God's love? Do I reach out to help those in need? Beyond the support I give to family and friends, what do I do to improve the lives of others?
- 3.) God asks us to support the community that he established to continue the teaching and ministry of Jesus throughout the ages, that is, the church. Do I regularly worship/ attend mass with this community? Do I regularly offer the gifts of my time, my talent, and my treasure to support the ministries of the Christian community?
- 4.) Finally, if your son/daughter were to follow you around for a day, what would they learn about you? About your faith? About Jesus? How might you be a better teacher or example?

You see, unless you have your own faith life in order, you will never be able to pass that faith on to your child. Unless you live a life in imitation of Jesus Christ and in support of his church, you will not be able to pass this wonderful treasure on to your child.

We truly want the best for your child, the best possible examples of Jesus Christ in his or her life. We want to pass on to your child a faith that is a beacon throughout life, a faith lights the way through a life filled with joy, peace, and contentment, a hope that inspires him or her to trust in God and his offer of eternal life, and a love that beautifies and enriches every relationship, every moment of his or her life.

Your child's baptism can be the beginning of this wonderful life of grace, or it can be a missed opportunity. Please accept this invitation to be the instrument that God uses to love and nurture the child that he has entrusted to your care. Being a Christian parent involves much more than simply being a "nice" person in society's terms, it means being a "nice" person plus. That "plus", the plus of a lived, practiced faith makes all the difference.

And so . . .

If your faith makes you ready to accept the responsibility of raising your child so as to make the most of his or her baptism, here are some details . . .

## **1.) What is baptism?**

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Sacrament of Baptism is "the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as [children] of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission . . ." (Par. 1213).

The effects of Baptism are as follows:

- a.) We become beloved children of God and heirs of his offer of eternal life,
- b.) Original sin is removed,
- c.) We enter the universal Christian community. We become members of the Roman Catholic Church, the Diocese of Metuchen, and our particular parish, and
- d.) The life of grace begins in us (we are called to the other sacraments, we are dedicated to share in the mission of God=s people, etc.).

## **2.) When should baptism take place?**

Parents are encouraged to ready their lives to provide the best possible context for their child=s baptism, and then to seek that baptism as early as possible.

## **3.) When are baptisms scheduled at the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH)?**

The Sacrament of Baptism is administered at OLPH on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and last weekends of the month. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of the month, baptism is administered outside of mass both on Saturday at 11 am and on Sunday at 1:30 pm. On the last Sunday of the month, baptism is administered during the 12:15 pm Sunday mass.

## **4.) Who is eligible to serve as a godparent?**

From the information provided at the beginning of this booklet, it is clear that godparents must be stalwart examples of the fullness of Christian life.

Each child must have one godparent. This godparent must be a practicing Catholic Christian who can obtain a certificate to that effect from his or her own parish. Forms for this purpose are included with this booklet; these certificates must be returned to the parish office no later than one week before the baptism. In general, in order to be eligible to receive such a certificate and be a godparent, the church requires that the person meet all the following conditions:

- a.) The person cannot be the actual parent of the one to be baptized (grandparents are eligible),
- b.) The person must be at least 14 years old, and must have themselves received the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- c.) The person must regularly participate in mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation,
- d.) If married, the person=s marriage must be recognized by the Catholic Church.

The child to be baptized may also have a second godparent. This second godparent may be another practicing Roman Catholic Christian who fulfills all the conditions listed above, or they may be a practicing Christian of another denomination (Christian witness) who can obtain a letter from their church stating that they are practicing members of that community.

If the child has 2 godparents, there must be 1 godfather and 1 godmother. Families may appoint other “honorary godparents”, but the church cannot include them in our official documentation.

If a godparent will not be able to be present at the actual baptism, please ask about the appointment of a proxy during your Pre-Baptismal Interview.

### **5.) Who will perform my child's baptism?**

Generally, one of the parish clergy (priests and deacons) will be scheduled to administer the sacrament. If you have a particular preference, you may speak about that at your Pre-Baptismal Interview.

We also invite members of the Catholic clergy who are relatives or close friends of the child's family to administer the Sacrament of Baptism here at OLPH. If this situation applies to you, please discuss this during your Pre-Baptismal Interview.

### **6.) Is there a fee for my child's baptism?**

The church does not charge fees for the administration of the sacraments. This said, we do gratefully accept offerings from families who wish to share the joy of this occasion with the wider Christian community. An envelope for this purpose is included with this booklet; when families ask us to suggest an appropriate offering, we say \$50, but any offering is gratefully accepted. Be assured that the clergy member who performs the baptism does not keep this offering, it goes into our general fund to support the charitable and educational efforts of our parish community.

### **7.) So, what's next?**

When you have read and prayed over the material in this booklet and feel that you are ready to approach the church for your child's baptism, please contact the Parish Secretary at (908)766-0079, extension 2. She will arrange for one of the parish clergy to call you to schedule a Pre-Baptismal Interview.

The Pre-Baptismal Interview is a meeting of both parents (godparents are invited but not required to attend) with one of the members of our parish clergy. During this meeting, we will pray together, discuss the material contained at the beginning of this booklet, further discuss the meaning and rites of baptism, make particular arrangements, and answer any questions you may have. This meeting usually lasts between 30 and 45 minutes.

Children are certainly welcome to attend this meeting with their parents, but if a child's attendance would preclude a parent's full attention and participation in this meeting, it is probably better to arrange for babysitting.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to walking with you in your family's journey of faith.

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